

The Promise

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I have had many promises made to me in my lifetime; from my childhood growing up until now. Some promises were realized; many became disappointments and others, fading dreams. Interestingly, some became surprises. For at a moment when I thought there was the least probability that a certain promise would be kept, the promiser stand true to his or her word. Although, I wished that some of those promises had not come through. There is much joy in good promises that are kept and that fosters trust in the promiser.

However, it does not take too many broken promises to make one into an untrusting unbeliever, and it seems that as a child growing up, I may have had that one too many. For this very reason I seldom make promises, especially to my children; to anyone for that matter. I find that if I have it in my heart to do something for someone, I just plan, and execute when it becomes possible. I might be so determined to do this thing that sometimes I even promise myself to do it. After all of my experiences of shattered expectations, I should be able to cope well with my own broken promises, I think. I find that I had become, what I coined, an “unexpected person”. As one friend said to me “He that expects not, shall never be disappointed”. So I conditioned my mind not to expect anything of any promise made to me. If someone promised me anything, I would say to myself, “Well I am not looking for anything; if it comes, then it is so” or “when I see it, I will believe it”. Then I would try to dismiss it from my mind, not matter how good it sounded or how easy is seemed.

What exactly is a promise? Here are the Webster’s New world’s definitions:

prom•ise

noun

- 1 an oral or written agreement to do or not to do something; vow
- 2 indication, as of a successful prospect or future; basis for expectation
- 3 something promised

Prom`is•er

noun

All three definitions are well put, but it is the 2nd definition that I like most. It speaks of a prospect; an indication of something that one should receive; the basis for expecting something. It tells me that for the “unexpected person”, what would otherwise be a promise, has ceased to be. In other words, a promise is not a promise to you if you do not expect anything.

I don’t think my experiences with promises are unique. Maybe you have had similar experiences too. If so, I wonder if you were faced with the same challenges as I had when at first I read of the promises of God. It is easy to brush the idea aside and say “Oh, God is different, I can trust Him”. But most people who believe that God does in fact exist may accept this in theory; but how practical will be they, when it comes down to the point of receiving that which He has promised? For some people this might be easier, but for those who, like the “unexpected” me, who have had a history of unfulfilled promises, this could be more challenging.

Why are some promises fulfilled while others are not? Let’s take God for example; after all, He is God, the Almighty, why would not all His promises be fulfilled? Yet the apostle Paul says this in 2nd Corinthians 1 and verse 20; “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” In other words all the promises of

God are yes and so let it be. In fact, God Himself through the words of the prophet Isaiah said: “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” (*Isa 55:10, 11*) Wow! That is such a boots! Yet the question is still unanswered. Why are some promises fulfilled while others are not?

The answer lies in one prominent principle of all God’s promises; they are conditional. In fact all promises are conditional; all those made by God as well as those made by mortal man. Firstly, in the case of man, because man is mortal, his promise is only as sure as his existence. So if a person makes a promise and he dies before the time is fulfilled, then his promise was on condition of whether or not he lives to do it. Secondly, there are other factors in life that can turn the tide in the promiser’s life. Circumstances such as natural disasters, bankruptcy, etc, can adversely affect his ability to fulfil such; even a will of testament can be so affected that it be not fulfilled. Thirdly, the promises of mortal man are conditional on his trustworthiness. A man can make a promise and for varied reasons he may change his mind.

However, none of the above sets the conditions for God’s promises, because God’s promises can not be affected by those conditions. He is the Almighty God, Creator of all things, above and below the earth and nothing is impossible to Him in fulfilling His desires.

So, why are there conditions to God’s promises and what are some of those conditions? First and foremost, God has given every man some evidence of His trustworthiness and He expects that any man who should receive of His promise should thrust His words. Therefore if He says He will do it, then He will do it for you if you trust him. So the first condition of His promise to you is faith. This is how the apostle James puts it: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord” (James 1:5, 7) Also the apostle Paul writing to the Hebrews, speaks to this in this way: “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Heb 11:6). If you do not expect anything from the words of this person, then to you there is no promise. How then can anything happen, for there is no promise! Promise is the basis for expectation, therefore; no expectation; no promise; no result. Like I said before, a promise is not a promise to you if you do not expect anything. Without expectation the promise ceased. My friend Howard was right when he said that “He that expects not shall never be disappointed” but I say, that he that expects nothing of God, shall receive the same; nothing.

Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with good and precious promises and also promises of negative consequences; but they are all conditional. Notice the “**ifs**” in the following verses for example:

“Now therefore, **if** ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:” (Exo 19:5)

“**If** ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.” (Lev 26:3-5)

“But **if** ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments. And **if** ye shall despise my statutes, or **if** your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant. I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. (Lev 26:14-17)

If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. (John 14:14)

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. (John 15:7)

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. (John 15:10)

Ye are my friends, **if** ye do whatsoever I command you. (John 15:14)

You see, all those years of disappointments from broken promises were because I did not factor in the conditions upon which they were made. Where man is concerned, I had not considered all the mortal conditions naturally imposed. So when the promises failed, I became more “unexpected”. And what became worse was that I had not taken notice of the difference in the natural conditions of God’s promises compared to that of man’s. I was approaching the promises of God in the same “unexpected” manner, albeit inadvertently. And having been so “unexpected”, many of the promises of God to me were neutralized; ceased. And sure enough, when they were not fulfilled, naturally, I became more “unexpected”. And although I believed that God existed and wanted to have more faith in Him, I was in fact becoming more faithless. I found that faithlessness multiplied into more faithlessness, just as I found out later that true faith multiplies into more faith. Then someone told me that faith was based upon promises. That was when things really got complicated. So I knew that God’s promises were conditional and the foremost condition was faith, and faith was based upon God’s promises. Wow! That seems cyclic.

But as time went by I found out that what seemed complicated in theory was quite simple in practise. How do you build trust in someone? He gives a little and you receive and see that it is good and he tells you there is more, and you ask of more, not too certain and partially expecting to receive it and he gives a little more and you are surprised and excited. Then you ask for more with much more confidence, and he tests you a little. Then you remember that he gave freely before and told you that he had more to give, so though you do not understand the delay and seemingly none response, you continue to expect to receive. Then he gives you your desire, and your joy is full because he did not let you down. A trust has begun to grow as the faithfulness of your friend is established.

Did you notice that all your expectations were based on his promises? But he gave you first, enough to build your expectations in him. So it is with God. The bible says that God has dealt (given) to every man a measure of faith. (Romans 12:3). And He is pleased when you believe, trust, have faith and expect to receive of Him.

¶Recently I had an experience where faith and expectation were connected to His promise. I called it the story of “The Lost Screw”.

On the 28th of January, 2010, we boarded the 7:45 domestic flight to the Cayman Brac. We were on a mission to our communication site to do long overdue repairs from the effects of Hurricane Paloma and to do some maintenance work as well. Prior to boarding, I made sure to remove my Leatherman from my belt, and tucked it into the bag containing some the tools we were carrying. A Leatherman is a utility tool that most serious technicians use in the field. My Leatherman has two knives (one serrated), three Flat Point and one

Phillips screwdrivers, a two sided hardened file, an awl, a shark teeth saw capable of cutting wood, plastic and even aluminium, a tin/bottle opener and a pair of bird beak pliers with wire stripper/cutter. With this kind of tool a technician can take on much in the field.

An hour later, we were on the sister Island and headed to the site located somewhere on the centre of the bluff. At the site the sun shined brightly on the sharp dragged rocks surrounding a hundred foot tower, while a mild sea wind blew. We unpacked our tools and materials and started at the task of replacing the damaged PVC conduit and wires which powered the obstruction lights. I used my Leatherman to cut all the PVC we needed which ran from the cabinet housing the transmitter, to the tower which was anchored amid the razor sharp rocks and several small cockpits.

We were soon finished with that and started to split open, nearly two lengths of PVC conduits which we would use to slip over the existing Power Supply cable line, which was laid on the ground unprotected. As I cut through the last two feet of the second conduit, I paused to rest. I placed the Leatherman on the concrete base of the cabinet and noticed that a screw that pivoted one of the pliers was missing. I had no idea when it got loosed or where I was when it happened. Was it when I stood over those cockpits at the base of the tower? Or was it when I walked along the cable tray where we just laid the new conduit? I thought it could have been any of those places, although I considered that it was most likely where I had done most of the cutting through of those two lengths of PVC. So I put on my glasses and searched in all of those places; spending most of the time where I did most of the cutting. All this time I pray fervently that God would show me the missing screw.

Earlier on, while we were repairing and replacing the first conduit, my assistant removed the screws of a connection box into which the conduit was connected, and the first one he removed fell and bounced towards the mouth of a cockpit. In less than ten seconds later, he ejaculated one of the most salacious and barbaric of Jamaican curse words as the last and second screw fell and bounded towards the mouth of another cockpit and disappeared. (This was really the day of the lost screws). I instantly rebuked him gently; saying. "Why are you inviting the spirit of the devil here, why don't you ask God to help you find it?" I encouraged him to trust and ask God to help us find it. I said, "Look God is going to find this screw for you today. In less than two minutes, the first screw was found in a pocket of a rock, at the edge of that cockpit. I gave God thanks and glory for His kindness then we began to look for the second screw which fell between some rocks which partially blocked that cockpit. I continued to pray that God will show us the second screw, but our search only convinced us that it had fallen deep into the cockpit. As I stood up and thought about it calmly, I looked around and there on the ground was a fragment of the old connector box which was broken into pieces by the hurricane. The cover was gone but the screw was there intact. I gave God thanks audibly and then I observed that there was not just only one screw from the old box but the second was also in another fragment lying on the ground.

All these were lessons of faith from God was in preparation for the lost of the most important screw of the day. You see, God showed us the first screw and then He allowed the second one to fall out of our reach, to test and strengthen our developing faith. Neither of the two screws was necessary to be found, because the old screws, though hidden from our eyes, were there, safely on the ground. Yet He answered the prayer of faith, that we may augment trust in Him. All of this was witnessed by my unsaved assistant. It was not necessary for Him to recover the second screw because there were two others lying around.

As important as these screws were, none of them were to me as important as my Leatherman screw. This screw was unique and was not to be easily replaced. I continued sawing the rest of the conduit while I looked and prayed as I took short breaks between each

stage of the project. I spent most of my searching time at the same spot I sawed the two lengths of conduits, picking up stones, clearing away partially rotten leaves and twigs; even raking up the soil which I had trodden down before I knew what had happened. Still there was no sign of this shiny stainless steel screw. All this while I prayed to the Father in Jesus, making references to the promise Jesus made, that if we abide in Him and in His words, whatever we ask the Father in His name, it shall be done. I said to Him,

“You knew that the screw would come loose and would fall, and you knew exactly where it would have fallen and where it now is. And I believe you will show me where it is and bring glory to your name in the presence of this unsaved young man”.

Still there was no screw. At this time, while I was still scanning the ground, I lifted my thoughts to heaven and said,

“Father I love you, and I love you Jesus; and even if I don’t find this screw I still trust you and love all the same. You knew that this would have happened and you could have prevented it; yet you allowed it to happen for a wise and good purpose and I trust your wisdom and goodness towards me in Jesus.”

I looked some more and then I started to think that I might have to order this screw from Leatherman, or ask a machine shop to machine a replacement. But somehow I did not give up hope in finding this screw. For then I realized that my prayer was not so much for the screw. The screw was replaceable, albeit with some difficulty of cost and time. But my prayer was about God hearing me and answering to His honour and glory.

I was not the only one looking for the screw; my sole assistant was searching too. He had just finished replacing the obstruction light at the top of this hundred foot guyed tower, and I prayed that God would grant him a safe climb up and down. I later learned that he too had thanked God when he was done.

While we were rapping up the last portion of the mission, I asked him if ye think that God would hear and answer my prayers, or if he thought I was unworthy of such. “No, I don’t think you are unworthy but I think we have used up all the screw finding answer we had with God for the day” he said suggestively.

“Do you believe that God is like that? He is not, but He promises to answer those who trust and obey His words” I said resolutely.

“I know, I am just joking” He said reassuringly.

With that I made one more search and with no evidence of the screw, I said decidedly, “God, you know all things best”. Yet deep in my heart, although I know not how, I thought somehow I would find it; if not then, maybe on some other return trip.

There was one last thing left to do on this mission and that was to install a drain hose on the air-condition unit, so that the condensed water would not flow onto the cabinet and cause it to rust. I asked my assistant for a flat point screwdriver but he could not find his regular one so I asked about another one he had in his bag that used a socket tips. Then he remembered that he had a set of tips and pulled out a flat tip and handed it to me. As I began the task, I used the screwdriver to clear away some fresh paint from within the pipe before I pushed on the hose. With paint on the tip, I flashed the screwdriver with the intention to get rid of the paint. I was surprised to see a telescopic rod extending from within the handle of the screwdriver with the tip still sticking onto the end. So I said to my assistant, “Why didn’t you tell me you had a magnet in this thing? I could have used it and search for my screw!” He said he had forgotten it had one in there. So I told him he could use it and search for my screw later when he was finished.

When we were both finished, I humbly entreated him to make a search using the little telescopic magnet in his screwdriver and he obliged me. Well after a while he said all he was

finding was an ant's nest and old rusted scraps of metal. And while he continued speaking he said unwittingly "and see even this little old screw here", I lifted my hands to heaven and with all the breath I had in me, I gave the loudest GLORY to God and Hallelujah I could ever give. I thanked God on top of my voice for answering my prayer and my expectation. Then I confessed to the young man, that the screw was not the most important thing, but that God had heard and answered my prayer. How wise and marvellous is our heavenly Abba Father. Even in the fact that He did not let me find the screw myself but had chosen the young man to find it; so that His name, honour and glory might be displayed to him as a witness of His faithfulness to those who trust and expect His promise to come through.

Do you believe that God spoke this whole world into existence? If you do believe that He exists and did all this, how much more do you think it will take Him to keep His promise to you? "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not **with him** also freely give us all things? (Rom 8:32) If you believe that He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him to us to die, when compared to any other gift that He had promised, do you not think He will keep all His other promises? But look at the verse again. Notice that it said that God gave His own Son and gave all things along with him, freely!

(Luke 11:11-13) "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: **how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?**"

The Holy Spirit (the Comforter) is the Glorified Jesus whom God has given to us freely. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (Gal 4:6) For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: (Col 2:10)

The conditions we face in the promises of God, is not a limitation on His part, but on ours. These conditions do not limit God's ability to give, but our ability to receive that which He has already given. If you will not take what He gives, He will not force you to receive it. We limit ourselves by not taking what He has given because we do not trust Him. That is the sad truth. We do not receive His promise because we do not expect it. We have not a basis of expectation. We have no promise even though there is one. It is not a promise to us because we do not believe or expect it. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." (Mat 21:22)

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. (Mat 17:19-21)

If your faith is weak and you are wondering how you may increase it, the preceding verse is a start. Here is another pointer: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Rom 10:17). Read the word of God daily and meditate on it throughout the day. Expect an answer from God when you pray in faith according to His promise. For His word shall not return unto Him void, but it shall accomplish that which He pleases, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto He sent it. God Bless You.¶